

CHAPTER III

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

GENEALOGIES.

THE genealogies on the next two pages show the relationship existing between the various individuals of the three Vedda communities, which still retain enough of the old Vedda mode of life to make a study of their organization valuable. At the first glance it is obvious that these genealogies do not go back beyond the memory of middle-aged men of the present day. We are convinced that this is due, not to any general distrust of our inquiries, but simply to certain peculiarities of the Vedda habit of thought which is directly dependent on their mode of life. The first of these is the extraordinary lack of memory shown by every Vedda for the names of individuals of more than one generation older than himself. This may perhaps be due to the fact that the number of individuals whom any one knows well is really small, being necessarily limited to the community to which he himself belongs. The genealogies show how small are these communities and, since every Vedda should marry a first cousin, marriage does little or nothing to enlarge the number of his connections. Further, each of the people with whom he comes in contact is related to him in a definite manner and is called and spoken of by a definite kinship term, so that personal names come to play a very small part in the daily life of the Veddas. It is this, doubtless, that has led to the frequent persistence of the baby names Tuta and Tuti, "little one" in its male and female forms, as the only names by which many individuals are known, and this together with the number of children called by

[p. 59] [Text continues on p. 62]

86

THE VEDDAS

Things new to them which we showed.

152
522

them often provoked peals of laughter; to see the eldest and most venerable man solemnly have his thumb nail pressed by a brass machine (algometer) was particularly amusing to the rest of the community, one man actually rolling on the ground with laughter. The old man took it all in excellent part and smiled indulgently. Doubtless Veddass vary much in character, but all except the "show" Veddass are genial and courteous, and have always been rightly considered truthful. At Sitala Wanniya Handuna was the most intelligent man, keenly interested in all the new things we showed him; he obviously ruled the community by force of character, coupled with the fact that he was a shaman. Nila, however, was also a shaman, but he was obviously not so strong a man as Handuna, to whose opinion he deferred, and naturally took second place. Vela, half-brother of Handuna, was extremely shy but by no means stupid, he generally tried to get out of doing things, professing inability, but when urged by Handuna did everything as well as the other men. Kaira, *baena* (son-in-law) to Handuna, was intelligent and talkative and inclined to be boastful. Pema, *baena* to Nila, did not speak much, chiefly we thought because he was a young man and had not much to tell, for although he did not chatter like Kaira he smiled and did not hang his head when addressed, as Vela did.

153
554
156

Whether staying in a "private" or "communal" cave the family life continues in much the same manner. If in a communal cave, each family keeps strictly within its own limits, the women may always be seen at exactly the same spot, and when the men come in they sit or lie beside their wives, keeping to that part of the cave floor that belongs to them as carefully as though there was a partition dividing it from that of their neighbours. Figure 2 is a plan of Pihilegodagalge showing the actual division of floor space. Food is frequently cooked by one woman and shared by all the members of the community, in fact, although it might be cooked separately, it did not seem that any food was private property. One other fact was very noticeable in communal caves, namely, that men never kept their bows and arrows in their own division, but always put them all together in a particular

342
592
621
423

621
422